

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, OTRA, MASS, ET, US

SUBJECT: ISSUES PAPER FOR WSAG MEETING ON ETHIOPIA,

1500 HOURS, APRIL 24, 1974

THE SITUATION

1. FOR THE PAST TWO MONTHS ETHIOPIA HAS BEEN GOING THROUGH GREAT SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TURMOIL. THERE HAVE BEEN REVOLTS AND STRIKES IN MILITARY UNITS THROUGHOUT THE EMPIRE. UNPOPULAR OR ALLEGEDLY CORRUPT OFFICERS HAVE BEEN DRIVEN OUT OR ARRESTED BY THEIR TROOPS. PRESSURE FROM THE REBELLIOUS MILITARY FORCED THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE CONCESSIONS ON BETTER PAY AND IMPROVEMENTS IN SERVICE CONDITIONS AND FINALLY COMPELLED THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS CABINET TO RESIGN. THE UNREST QUICKLY SPREAD TO OTHER GROUPS-- LABOR UNIONS, STUDENTS, POLICE AND THE LANDLESS PEASANTS. ALL ARE MAKING DEMANDS FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REFORMS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL FIND DIFFICULT TO SATISFY.

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2. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LONG REIGN, THE EMPEROR HAS BEEN FORCED TO YIELD TO POPULAR PRESSURES. THE POWER OF THE ABSOLUTE MONARCHY HAS BEEN BROKEN, PROBABLY IRREPARABLY. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY JUST HOW MUCH CONTROL THE EMPEROR IS NOW EXERCISING OVER THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT, BUT IT APPEARS TO BE VERY LITTLE. THE CONFUSION AND DISORGANIZATION AT THE CENTER HAS MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO EXERCISE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER THE OUTLYING PROVINCES.

IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT EROSION OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION IN MOST OF ETHIOPIA TODAY. THE REAL POWER IN ETHIOPIA TODAY LIES WITH THE MILITARY. THE OFFICERS HAVE NOT, IT IS TRUE, TAKEN OVER THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, BUT THERE IS GOOD EVIDENCE THAT THE NEW PRIME MINISTER, ENDALKATCHEW MAKONNEN, MUST OBTAIN APPROVAL FROM THE MILITARY FOR ALL OF HIS POLICIES AND ACTIONS. EVEN THE MILITARY IS THREATENED BY FACTIONAL SPLITS, AND ONE CANNOT PREDICT WHICH GROUP WILL BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH ITS DOMINANCE OR WHETHER ANY SORT OF UNITY WITHIN THE MILITARY CAN BE MAINTAINED.

3. THE MILITARY SECURITY SITUATION HAS NOT DETERIORATED AS ONE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED. THE SOMALIS, WHOSE EXPANSIONIST POLICIES THE ETHIOPIANS FEAR, HAVE REMAINED QUIESCENT. THE ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT HAS NOT STEPPED UP ITS ACTIVITIES NOTICEABLY. THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT NEVERTHELESS FEARS THAT THE SECURITY STABILITY COULD BE BROKEN AT ANY MOMENT, AND THE ETHIOPIAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT FEELS PARTICULARLY ILL-EQUIPPED TO COPE WITH A SOMALI MILITARY ADVENTURE. ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR KIFLE TOLD ME THIS MORNING THAT THERE WAS "IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE" THAT SOMALIA HAD DECIDED TO ATTACK ETHIOPIA, AND THAT A "RUNNING DEBATE" WAS NOW UNDERWAY WITHIN THE SOMALI GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE TIMING OF SUCH AN ATTACK.

4. AMERICAN INTERESTS - (A) PHYSICAL SECURITY OF APPROXIMATELY 3,500 AMERICAN CITIZENS; (B) ACCESS TO ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY IN SUPPORT OF U.S. STRATEGIC OPERATIONS IN THE RED SEA-INDIAN OCEAN AREA (OVERFLIGHT AND LANDING
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RIGHTS, PATROL AIRCRAFT STAGING, PORT VISITS FOR OUR INDIAN OCEAN FLEET, LOGISTIC SUPPORT FOR OUR NAVAL VESSELS, ETC) (C) RETENTION OF THE RESIDUAL COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES AT KAGNEW STATION FOR TWO MORE YEARS; (D) PRESERVATION OF A RELIABLE, FRIENDLY POWER IN THE HORN OF AFRICA WHICH SHARES OUR VIEWS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LIMITING USSR, PRC, AND RADICAL ARAB PENETRATION AND INFLUENCE IN THAT REGION; (E) THE US PRESTIGE AS THE STRONGEST AND TRADITION-

AL SUPPORTER OF THE IMPERIAL ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT; (F)
ACCESS TO ETHIOPIA'S RAW MATERIALS (POTENTIAL EXPLOITATION
OF OIL, GAS, AND POTASH) AND MARKETS.

ISSUES

5. THE PRIMARY QUESTION TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE WSAG IS
HOW DO WE USE OUR ASSETS IN THE FACE OF THE DETERIORATION
OF THE ETHIOPIAN SITUATION TO BEST PROTECT OR ADVANCE THE

INTERESTS INDICATED ABOVE. THE MOST URGENT PROBLEM FACING
THE WSAG WILL BE TO ANSWER THE ETHIOPIAN REQUEST FOR NEW,
MASSIVE AMERICAN ARMS ASSISTANCE TO COUNTER AN ALLEGEDLY
INCREASING MILITARY THREAT FROM THE SOMALIS, WHO THE
ETHIOPIANS BELIEVE WILL BE TEMPTED TO EXPLOIT ETHIOPIA'S
INTERNAL WEAKNESSES BY ATTACKING THE SOMALI INHABITED
OGADEN AND HAUD REGIONS OF THE EMPIRE. SPECIFIC ISSUES
THAT WILL BE PERTINENT TO THIS AND OTHER POSSIBLE US
ACTIONS ARE:

-- HOW IMPORTANT IS THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF ETHIOPIA TO
US? HOW BADLY WOULD OUR POSITION IN AFRICA, THE ARAB
WORLD AND THE INDIAN OCEAN AREA SUFFER IF WE DID NOT
HAVE ACCESS TO ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY FOR THE PURPOSES
CITED ABOVE?

-- ETHIOPIA'S PRESENT DOMESTIC PROBLEMS HAVE ARISEN OUT
OF INTERNAL SOCIAL DISCONTENT AND UNREST. WILL
MILITARY AID RESOLVE THE GOVERNMENTS PRESENT
DIFFICULTIES.? MIGHT NOT ANY MONEY WE ARE WILLING
TO GIVE THE ETHIOPIANS BE BETTER SPENT IN OTHER WAYS?

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-- THE ETHIOPIANS ARGUE THAT IF THE SOMALIS ARE ABLE TO
TAKE AND HOLD ANY ETHIOPIAN TERRITORY AT ALL, EVEN A
FEW MILES, THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT (ENDALKATCHEW)
AND POSSIBLY EVEN THE EMPEROR WILL FALL. DO WE HAVE
ANY INTEREST IN PRESERVING THE PRESENT ETHIOPIAN
GOVERNMENT? WOULD OUR INTERESTS NOT PROSPER BETTER
IF WE WERE ASSOCIATED WITH A MORE POPULAR GOVERNMENT?

-- CAN WE OBJECTIVELY ASCERTAIN THE DEGREE OF THE
MILITARY THREAT FROM SOMALIA. HOW LIKELY ARE THE
SOMALIS TO ATTACK?

-- WHAT WILL BE THE US AND FOREIGN PUBLIC REACTION TO THE
PICTURE OF THE US RUSHING TO HELP A DROUGHT-STRICKEN
AND SOCIALLY TURBULENT COUNTRY WITH MILITARY RATHER

THAN ECONOMIC AID?

-- IS A SIGNIFICANT BUILD UP IN OUR MILITARY AID TO ETHIOPIA FEASIBLE, GIVEN US DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND HIGHER PRIORTIES ESTABLISHED FOR OTHER AREAS? CAN WE GET A PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION? WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR CONGRESSIONAL ACTION?

-- IF WE DO GIVE THE MILITARY AID REQUESTED, WILL THIS IN FACT DETER THE SOMALIS? WILL IT NOT ALARM SOMALIA

AND RESULT IN ESCALATION OF SOVIET MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA? THE SOMALIS ARE SOVIET CLIENTS. CAN WE SEEK SOVIET COOPERATION IN URGING RESTRAINT ON THE SOMALIS?

-- WHAT WILL MILITARY OR ECONOMIC AID BUY US? WE HAVE ASKED THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT FOR BASE RIGHTS FOR P-3 PATROL AIRCRAFT. THE ETHIOPIANS HAVE REPLIED IN ESSENCE THAT THE BASE RIGHTS MIGHT BE AVAILABLE FOR A PRICE. CAN WE GET THE BASE RIGHTS AS A QUID PRO QUO FOR THE ASSISTANCE THEY SEEK: HOW MUCH ASSISTANCE WOULD BE REQUIRED?

-- IF WE GIVE MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND GET THE BASE RIGHTS, WHAT ARE THE CHANCES WE WILL BE ABLE TO
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RETAIN THEM IF THIS GOVERNMENT FALLS (AND ALMOST EVERYONE THINKS THAT SOONER OR LATER IT WILL)?

-- CAN WE TAKE ANY ACTION AT ALL THAT WOULD ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF THE PRESENT ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT? IN THE LONG RUN, HOW USEFUL WOULD A GOVERNMENT BE THAT EXISTS ONLY THANKS TO OUR INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT? WHAT WOULD BE THE ULTIMATE COST TO US? KISSINGER

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